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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 000728

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: DESPITE REFORMS, BUREAUCRATS BLOCK KURDISH COURSES

REF: A. 02 ANKARA 6116

[1](#)B. 02 ANKARA 8564

[1](#)C. 02 ANKARA 7290

Classified by Polcouns John Kunstadter; reasons 1.5 b and d.

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Despite reform legislation allowing Kurdish language courses, bureaucratic regulations place prohibitive costs by requiring that the courses be established in separate institutions, rather than added to existing schools. The owner of a chain of language schools says there is not enough demand for Kurdish courses to cover the costs of establishing a separate institution. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) As part of its August 2002 reform package (Reftel A), Parliament passed legislation allowing the establishment of private courses in Kurdish and other "languages and dialects traditionally used by Turkish citizens in their daily lives." Nazif Ulgen, the Istanbul-based owner of the English Fast language schools, told Poloff January 23 that he had applied for approval to open a Kurdish course shortly after the new law was adopted. However, Education Ministry officials in October told him the regulations implementing the law do not allow Kurdish courses to be added to existing institutions; a new institution must be created, with a separate building, management, and secretarial staff. Ulgen said interest in private Kurdish courses is limited, and the costs of creating a separate institution are prohibitive. If he were allowed to add Kurdish courses to his five schools -- which offer English, French and German -- he estimated he could attract a total of about 100 students. There is no profit to be made in teaching Kurdish, but, as a Kurd himself, he would do it on principle. However, he said, the roughly USD 100,000 it would cost to create a separate institution will prevent anyone from establishing Kurdish courses. Both Ulgen and our GOT contacts said they believe Ulgen is the only one to apply so far for Kurdish courses.

[1](#)3. (C) Inan Ozyildiz, international affairs advisor to the President, told Poloff he had heard about Ulgen's situation. Ozyildiz opined that it will "eventually" be resolved. The Education Ministry may revise its interpretation of the regulation, or, if necessary, the GOT may draft a new regulation. He said Turkey is in the early stages of a reform process. There are still many flaws, but the overall trend is clearly positive. "We want to see these rights and freedoms fully implemented. We don't want to see them only on paper," he averred. Ulgen too is surprisingly optimistic. He is frustrated that he is unable to take advantage of the language reforms, despite 25 years' experience running language schools. "If you don't trust established organizations, whom will you trust?" he asked. Still, he believes the regulations will eventually have to be loosened as Parliament continues to lift restrictions on freedom of expression, though it may take years. He blamed the current roadblock on a bureaucracy dominated by a "nationalistic mentality" that views expanded freedoms as threats to the State.

Comment

[1](#)4. (C) Ulgen is one of a number of Embassy contacts who have recently stressed their belief that the Turkish bureaucracy opposes GOT reforms and is working to undermine them. It is a difficult argument to refute, as there have been a series of bureaucratic regulations undermining the spirit of reform legislation. In addition to the restrictions on Kurdish courses, the bureaucracy has also placed tight limits on Kurdish broadcasts (Reftel B) and the rights of minority foundations to own property (Reftel C).

PEARSON